IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claim 48, as follows. All claims in the application are being reproduced below in accordance with current U.S. Patent and Trademark Office requirements.

Claims 1 through 47 (Cancelled).

48. (Currently Amended) An exposure apparatus for exposing a wafer to a pattern, said apparatus comprising:

a chamber in which an atmosphere is conditioned to be different from an atmosphere in another apparatus outside of said exposure apparatus and the wafer is exposed to the pattern; and

a port section through which the wafer is transferred between said chamber and the other apparatus, said port section having a load-lock mechanism including a vacuum mechanism for creating a vacuum below atmospheric pressure inside of said port section and a supply mechanism for supplying an inert gas into the inside of said port section.

49. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 48, wherein said exposure apparatus includes a plurality of said port sections.

50. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 49, wherein said port sections include a first port section for loading the wafer and a second port section for unloading the wafer.

51. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 48, further comprising an interface section for stocking a wafer between said port section and the other apparatus.

52. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 51, wherein said interface section includes a load-lock mechanism.

53. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 51, wherein said interface section is shared by a plurality of said port sections.

54. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 48, wherein the other apparatus includes a coating/developing system.

55. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 48, wherein said port section includes a temperature control mechanism for controlling a temperature of the wafer.

56. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 55, wherein said temperature control mechanism includes at least one of a heater and a cooler.

57. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 55, wherein said load-lock mechanism and said temperature control mechanism operate in parallel with each other.

58. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 48, wherein said chamber includes a temperature control mechanism for controlling a temperature of the wafer.

59. (Previously Presented) An apparatus according to claim 58, wherein an ambient atmosphere of said temperature control mechanism is conditioned to be different from another atmosphere in said chamber.

60. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing system comprising:

an exposure apparatus defined in claim 48; and

another apparatus which performs for a wafer at least one of a pre-process and a post-process with respect to an exposure process to be performed by said exposure apparatus.

61. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method comprising:

a step of exposing a wafer to a pattern using an exposure apparatus defined in claim 48.

62. (Previously Presented) A device manufacturing method comprising:

a step of processing a wafer using a device manufacturing system as defined in claim 60.